

# Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Meeting Minutes

Detroit Historical Museum, Board Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

June 23, 2017

**Commissioners Present:** Ronald Brown, Amanda Campbell, Rochelle Danquah, Roy Finkenbine, Juanita Moore, David Teeter, Reverend Kevin Turman

**Via Conference Call:** James Turner joined briefly at 1:10 PM, but connection was interrupted and he was unable to reconnect.

**Excused:** Edwina Murphy, Michael Nassaney

**Absent:** Robin Peebles

**Visitors:** None

**Staff present:** Tobi Voigt, Mary Patrick

Prior to the start of the meeting, those present toured the Detroit Historical Museum's new exhibit *Doorway to Freedom*.

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Finkenbine called the meeting to order at 11:54 AM.
2. **Welcome New Members & Center Staff:** Two Commission members were welcomed to their first meeting. Amanda Campbell is an Archaeologist with the U.S. Forest Service, participated in research on Ramptown, and is active in historic preservation matters. She will represent members at large, a spot formerly held by Michael Nassaney. Kevin Turman has been the senior pastor for 29 years of the Second Baptist Church of Detroit, which served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. He is chairman of the Harriet Tubman Center Board of Directors and a member of the NAACP. Turman represents individuals actively involved in civil rights issues, and replaces Tamara Barnes. While not new to the Commission, Michael Nassaney will now represent members of the academic community who are knowledgeable in African-American history; he replaces Kimberly Davis. Tobi Voigt was recently hired as the Michigan History Center's Community Engagement Director, and also attending her first meeting. Voigt was previously with the Detroit Historical Museum, and worked on the *Doorway to Freedom* exhibit.
3. **Agenda:** Turman moved to approve the agenda; Moore seconded the motion, and the agenda was approved unanimously.
4. **Public Comments:** None.
5. **Approval of Minutes:** Teeter moved to approve the February 17, 2017, meeting minutes as submitted; Moore seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved unanimously.
6. **Action Items:**
  - a. **Encouraging local and regional collaborations**  
Brown, Finkenbine and Teeter participated in "A Convening on the Underground Railroad in Detroit" at First Congregational Church, organized by National Park

Service Urban Fellow David Goldstein and Anise Hayes, Executive Director of Atlantic Impact. It was an initial meeting of local parties interested in furthering educational and cultural tourism opportunities related to the underground railroad story. Finkenbine requested ideas for ways the FTC can connect people and develop collaboration around the state on both the local and regional level.

Responses included:

- Add the FTC sites to the Michigan History Center's website.
- The City of Detroit is interested in developing something to show the UGRR sites in the city, with or without buildings. It will hold workshops in August to help educators teach about the underground railroad with resources that are available.
- It can be a challenge to get organizations to work together. Are there communities that can be used as a model to teach others how to work together? Are there places that share information with others so they are working together as partners rather than as competitors?
- Second Baptist Church held programs jointly with other institutions that were successful because the programs were very different and, therefore, not competitive.
- Jamon Jordan is a good Detroit resource.
- There was a 3-4 day tour that began in Cass County, went to Detroit, then ended in Buxton. That tour no longer exists, but there is a tour of Cass County. All the parts are there, but we need to find a way for them to be connected.
- Staff with the Department of Education are working towards a similar goal.
- A model to look at of coordinated effort that has attention and money is Cincinnati and its surrounding counties.
- All were asked to send links and examples to Patrick.

A break for lunch was taken at 12:30; the meeting resumed at 1:03 PM.

**b. Network to Freedom Nominations**

Finkenbine reported that Reverend Lottie Jones-Hood has taken over the completion of the Second Baptist Church nomination to the Network to Freedom. Danquah reported that she is currently working on nominations for four sites, and Cathy LaPointe is continuing to work on the Bonine House nomination.

**c. Status of Standing Committees**

Campbell expressed interest in either the Cultural and Heritage Tourism Committee or the Preservation and Support Committee. Finkenbine suggested that in order to move forward, the standing committees should meet twice per year outside the regularly scheduled meeting times of the full commission. He will work with Patrick to that end.

**d. 2017 Meeting locations**

The December 8 meeting will be held in Lansing. Campbell will work with Nassaney on a potential meeting site in the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek area for the September meeting. (NOTE: This meeting was later moved to October 3.)

## 7. Reports

### a. Staff:

Patrick reported that the Michigan Historical Marker database will be available to the public soon; she will send the link to commissioners. It is an ongoing project that will be added to and updated continuously.

### b. Chairperson:

Finkenbine (written report attached) reported that he presented at the Midwestern History Conference in Grand Rapids.

### c. Vice Chair:

Danquah reported that she attended the National Genealogical Society Conference. The 2018 conference will be held in Michigan, and she has written three Michigan-related proposals for it.

### d. Commissioner Reports: None.

### e. Standing Committee Updates:

- Site Identification, Facilities and Programs (Danquah, Nassaney):
- Cultural and Heritage Tourism (Peebles, Teeter): Ideas for “getting the word out” to local people and other states were discussed and included encouraging Pure Michigan to work with the FTC to develop ideas and a marker trail. Amanda said she would send the name of a successful U.S. Forest Service program and description to Patrick for sharing.
- Preservation and Support: Both members (Barnes, Turner) are no longer on the FTC so assistance is needed.
- Education: Brown noted that three books were purchased in preparation for co-writing (with Finkenbine) underground railroad lesson plans for middle and high school students. He has found that one of them, *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland*, is an excellent book for teaching. He is also utilizing *The TPS Journal*, an online publication created by the Library of Congress Educational Outreach Division, and Congressional ProQuest to locate documents.

## 8. New Business:

Finkenbine encouraged attendance at next year’s annual Freedom Trail conference so that Michigan has a presence.

## 9. News and Announcements:

Brown said that a conference will be held in Spring 2018 and the theme will be “Religion and the Underground Railroad.” He will share announcements as they become available. He noted that the deadline for submissions is October.

Moore reported on activities planned in Detroit for July 23, marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the civil unrest that took place in 1967. Both the Wright Museum and the Fox Theatre will host the premiere of the movie “Detroit” followed by conversations with the actors and directors on July 24. On July 22-25, “City to City” will be held to look at civil rights in Detroit and Paris and will take place at Wayne

State University. There will be two films shown at the Detroit Institute of Art and two films shown at the Wright Museum. Finkenbine noted that all the things Detroit is doing together with partners is the model of collaboration.

Danquah announced that she is now working on a PhD in History at Wayne State University.

**10. Adjourn meeting:**

Moore moved to adjourn the meeting; Campbell seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:58 PM without objection.

---

Sandra S. Clark, Executive Secretary